

Minutes for the
2022 CENTRAL STATES SYNOD ASSEMBLY

June 9 - 11

at the Embassy Suites
10401 S. Ridgeview Rd
Olathe, KS

Assembly theme: ***United with Christ: All Creation Groans. All Creation Sings.***

June 9, 2022

OPENING WORSHIP

Opening worship was held at Kaw Prairie Community Church and began at 7:15pm. Bishop Susan Candeia preached and presided. The band from Kaw Prairie led the music.

The Central States Synod wishes to acknowledge and honor the Kickapoo, Kaw, Osage and Sioux peoples upon whose ancestral homelands we gather for Assembly. The Central States Synod is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Kickapoo, Kaw, Osage, Kiowa, Comanche, Pawnee, Sioux and Kaskaskia peoples, and we give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to care for this place - this land - and call it their home

At the end of worship, Bishop Candeia officially opened the 2022 Central States Synod Assembly. There was an ice cream social after worship was concluded.

June 10, 2022

PLENARY 1

The assembly reconvened with morning prayer and worship at 8:30am at the hotel.

Bishop Candeia welcomed people back to assembly at 8:45am and began with a land acknowledgement. She introduced the synod staff and officers, and then offered a credentials report:

- Total members: 193
 - Lay 127
 - Rostered 66

Adoption of the Agenda & Rules for Procedure

- **SA 22.06.10.A1 It was MSC to adopt the agenda and rules for procedures as presented in the assembly materials.**

Bishop's Report

Bishop Candeia presented a written report and offered the following verbal highlights:

- Honesty and courage have been needed to make difficult decisions as we come out of the pandemic.
- Two congregations have voted to disaffiliate with the ELCA.
- A few other congregations have either stopped worshipping together or their membership has dwindled so much that they are no longer viable as congregations.
- She emphasized that our mission as a synod propels us forward into the world and community with the hope and message of Jesus Christ.
- Lutherans Restoring Creation is working for creation justice & helped provide the theme for this assembly.
- The Racial Justice Team has been formed to work for racial reconciliation.
- A new team is forming to help us be more welcoming to the LGBTQIA+ community.
- The synod staff has been working & consulting with congregations to help them discern and live out their missions. They have also been working on developing lay and rostered leaders.
- Following the example of the early church, we are encouraged to do the “loving” thing in the world.

Keynote Presentation #1: Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, our keynote speaker, was welcomed to the stage at 9:15am. In part 1, she spoke about “Being Beloved Creatures Called to Creation Care and Justice-Seeking Neighbor Love.” When we are called to love, we are called to work for justice in all creation. In part 2, she spoke about, “What is Going On.” We are called to think about the impact of our lives (not our intentions) and the impact of our collective lives (not just our individual lives). A faithful response to God’s love and God’s call is possible, and we are the people who are called to address the climate crisis threatening God’s creation.

The assembly took a break from 10:25 – 10:45am.

Treasurer’s Report

Scott Schulte presented a written Treasurer’s Report for 2021. He talked about the uncertainty of planning for 2021 after a very large surplus at the end of FYE 2020. Verbal highlights included:

- Total Support & Revenue vs. Total Expenditures
 - In 2021, we received \$1,634,478 in Total Support & Revenue, which is \$58,090 less than anticipated and \$58,293 less than last year.
 - In 2021, we spent \$1,634,034 in Total Expenditures, which was \$58,530 less than budgeted, and \$57,251 less than last year.
 - This led to a net surplus of \$440 as compared to a \$143,482 surplus last year.
- Under congregational support, the synod experienced a 3.9% decrease of \$62,250 from the previous year, decreasing from \$1,616,056 to \$1,553,806. This continues a long-term trend of decline in congregational support.
- Our contribution to Churchwide was \$776,903, which was a decrease of \$31,125 or 3.9% from the previous year.

Proposed Budget for 2023 (FYE 2024)

Scott Schulte presented both a line-item budget and a narrative budget for the proposed budget for FYE 2024. Verbal highlights included:

- He talked about the various ways that our common ministry is funded.
- He highlighted different things that we are planning to spend money on, including:
 - Churchwide contribution
 - Ministry Entrusted to the Synod (camps, advocacy, leadership development, etc.)
 - Ministry of Oversight and Pastoral Care (salary, campus ministry, call process, continuing education, etc.)
 - Ministry of ELCA Partnership (seminaries, Bethany College, Planned Giving, etc.)
 - Ministry of Place and Property (office rent & operations)
 - Ministry of Leadership and Outreach (Synod Council & deans' meetings, bishop's transition fund, technical enhancements for outreach, communications & evangelism)
- To support all of these ministries, as a synod we will spend a total of \$1,648,779 in 2023.

Mission Endowment Fund

Scott Schulte gave a brief report from the Synod Mission Endowment Fund, which distributed \$75,150 in grants to a variety of ministries. Most of these grants contribute to Leadership Development (including retirement of seminary debt & seminary scholarships) and Outreach within the synod.

Adoption of the Proposed Budget for 2023 (FYE 2024)

- **SA 22.06.10.A2 It was MSC to adopt the Proposed Budget for 2023 (FYE 2024).**

Nominations Committee Report

Pat Bjuland gave a report from the Nominations Committee. She presented the following nominations:

- Synod Council – At Large Female, POC:
 - Tullia Hamilton
 - Suah Gweama
- Synod Council – Deacon:
 - Mindy Tillberg
- Synod Council – Young Adult:
 - Joanie Saltzman
- Synod Council – Male Lay
 - William Meyerkord
 - Dallas Rakestraw

Greetings from the Churchwide Expression of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Nick Kiger, ELCA Director of Mission Support, offered greetings and began his report from ELCA Churchwide.

- He thanked us for sharing \$776,000+ in mission support with Churchwide.
- He lifted up our partnerships and ministry around the world, including through Lutheran Disaster Response, ELCA World Hunger, and Lutheran World Relief. This includes supporting relief efforts in Ukraine and central Europe.
- We have received domestic hunger grants and new mission start funds and put those to good use.

- Because of our connection to Churchwide, our church does ministry in all kinds of places.
- He concluded by sharing a video message from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton.

Greetings from Women of the ELCA

Vicky Donnell brought greetings from Central States Synod chapter of WELCA. They have an upcoming convention in Kansas City from July 22-24.

Greetings from Portico

Jennifer Prinz brought greetings from Portico. She began by showing a video and then offered brief remarks.

Greetings from Mission Investment Fund

Rev. Janice Kibler brought greetings from the Mission Investment Fund. She reported that 97 congregations in Central States have invested in this fund and shared some of the success stories.

Bethany Village

- **SA 22.06.10.A3 It was MSC for the Central States Assembly to go into recess and move into the Bethany Village meeting, led by Rev. Amy Truhe.**
 - The Central States Synod Assembly went to recess at 11:45am.
 - Rev. Truhe gave an update on some of the happenings around Bethany Village.
 - Bethany Village elected the following people to terms of office:
 - Monette Johnson 3 year term
 - Ryan Biegert 3 year term
 - Rev. Chris Deines 3 year term
 - In addition, the Bethany Village board of directors has elected the following people to serve as officers:
 - Rev. Amy Truhe President
 - Gelen Swenson Vice President
 - Ken Cummings Secretary
 - Connie Dorf Treasurer
- The Bethany Village meeting adjourned at 11:59am.

The Synod Assembly reconvened at 12:00pm.

Greetings from Bishop's Associate Rev. Dave Whetter

Rev. Dave Whetter gave a few updates and instructions for voting and lunch. He prayed, we sang, and then we adjourned for lunch at 12:05pm.

The afternoon of the Synod Assembly was in spent in various workshops related to creation care.

June 11, 2022

PLENARY 2

The assembly reconvened with a prayer and song at 8:30am.

Bishop Candeia welcomed people back to assembly at 8:35am. She then offered a credentials report for this morning's session:

- Total members: 258
 - Lay 161
 - Rostered 97

Election Results

Bishop Candeia reported the results of the elections that were held yesterday.

- For the synod council position for At Large Female POC, the results were:
 - Tullia Hamilton 119
 - Suah Gweama 71

Tullia Hamilton was elected to the synod council.
- For the synod council position for Deacon, Mindy Tillberg was unopposed and received 189 votes. **Mindy Tillberg was elected to the synod council.**
- For the synod council position for At Large Young Adult, Joanie Saltzman was unopposed and received 184 votes. **Joanie Saltzman was elected to the synod council.**
- For the synod council position for At Large Male, the results were:
 - William Meyerkord 87
 - Dallas Rakestraw 100

Dallas Rakestraw was elected to the synod council.

Vice President's Report

Nancy Nagel gave a report to the synod assembly. She talked about the role and duties of the synod council. She introduced the current synod council. She also touched on some of the issues that the synod council has been dealing with over the past year and how we have been making decisions and taking actions according to our new mission statement.

Keynote Presentation #2: Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, our keynote speaker, was welcomed to the stage at 8:50am. In part 3, she spoke about "Lutheran Seeds of Hope and Moral Spiritual Power." She offered three ways that Lutheran theology can help us engage in care for creation, including that we are 1) Beloved, 2) Broken by sin including structural sin, and 3) the Body of God's justice-seeking, Earth-relishing love. In part 4, she talked about "Tools for Practicing Creation Guided by Neighbor-Love." She offered various ideas and examples of how the church can practice creation care.

Compensation Guidelines

Rev. Michael Kern, chair of the Compensation Guidelines Committee, was welcomed to the stage to present the 2023 Compensation Guidelines for approval by the assembly. He reviewed a couple of changes that were made this year. This included changes to language in the sabbatical recommendations, the family & medical leave, pulpit supply sections, and the rostered ministers compensation worksheet. Recommended by the committee and approved by the synod council, it was properly before the assembly and opened for discussion.

- **SA 22.06.11.A4** **The 2023 Compensation Guidelines were approved.**

Lay Ministry Update

Rev. Adam Wutka, Director of Lay Ministry for the synod, gave greetings and updates from the PMA program. He clarified that S.A.M. stands for Synod Authorized Minister and is someone who serves on behalf of the bishop to preach/preside in worship. P.M.A. stands for Parish Ministry Associate and is a certification process enabling certified lay people to serve congregations in various ways.

The assembly took a brief break from 10:00 – 10:15am.

Resolutions

Rev. Phil Vickers, chair of the Resolutions Committee, was not able to be with us today. Rev. Dave Whetter was welcomed to the stage to introduce the resolutions at 10:15am.

Resolution SA 22.01 Limitations of Bishops by Gender

This resolution calls for

- the limitation of female gender Bishops to 45% of the total Bishops and the male gender Bishops to 45% of the total Bishops in the ELCA.
- Passing this resolution will put the Administration of the ELCA church in compliance with the changes in the model Constitutions required of all the individual congregations of the ELCA.
- Please present this Resolution action to the next annual meeting of the ELCA for a vote to change and comply.

This resolution was properly submitted, however it was not put to a vote. It was deemed unconstitutional by the Resolutions Committee given that the synod does not have the authority to limit or dictate the election of rostered ministers to the office of Bishop.

Resolution SA 22.02 Rules for Retired Pastors

This resolution calls for a change in the synod rules of activity for Retired Rostered Ministers.

- It is requested that the Synod allow Retired Rostered Ministers to preside over Funerals of formerly served congregants provided that: The deceased congregant or his/her family requests the specific serves of the former Pastor.
- Provided that: The former Pastor ministered to the deceased congregant for five years or more at the congregant's Lutheran Church and
 - 1) The funeral service takes place at a mortuary, cemetery, grave site, or other private or public place other than the ELCA church where the Pastor and Congregant attended.
 - 2) The former Pastor agrees to perform the service.
- The purpose of this change is to allow the deceased congregant and his/her family to have a meaningful last service in the Lutheran Faith with a Pastor that has an established relationship with the family without undermining the authority or responsibilities of the existing current Pastor of the former Pastor's Church.

This resolution was properly submitted, however it was not put to a vote. It was deemed unconstitutional by the Resolutions Committee given that the synod does not have the authority to override the rules for rostered ministers as dictated by the Rostered Leaders Manual of the ELCA.

Resolution SA 22.03 The Congregation Disposition of Assets Plan

This resolution calls for all 106 congregations in the Central States Synod to prepare a contingency “Disposition of Assets Plan” and submit it to the Synod within (12) twelve months.

- The plan will define the congregation’s wishes regarding the disposition of its physical assets in the face of natural or financial disaster or other shortcomings making the continuation of the Church as an ongoing religious organization untenable.
- This will allow the Synod to plan better for those Churches facing dwindling congregations or other causes which may result in the sudden title of the properties having to be assumed by the Synod.
- It also will require the existing congregations to make better decisions as to their wishes for the disposition of their “Estate” just as every family does in planning for the succession of their family assets.
- The recent demise of the Resurrection Church in St. Louis is an example of the synod suddenly being thrust into the position of taking title to a property 350 miles from the Synod offices with little advance notice.

This resolution was properly submitted, however it was not put to a vote. It was deemed unconstitutional by the Resolutions Committee given that the synod does not have the authority to dictate to congregations this or any other financial action.

Resolution SA 22.04 A Season of Global Awareness

This resolution comes properly before the assembly and has already been moved and seconded. This resolution was opened for discussion.

- Rev. Mary Mertz spoke in favor of the resolution, but had questions about changing the date so that it doesn’t conflict with Earth Day.
- Rev. Gary Teske spoke in favor of the resolution, but proposed an amendment:
 - To change the date to remember our partnership in Russia to Sunday, September 18.
 - The amendment was seconded.
 - The amendment was accepted.
 - It was also proposed to call the Companion Synod Team to designate a Sunday in Epiphany to remember our partnership in Papua New Guinea.
 - The amendment was seconded.
 - The amendment was accepted.

The final form of the resolution before the assembly reads:

- **Be it resolved that the Epiphany Season be designated as a “Season of Global Awareness” for congregations within the Central States Synod and that congregations intentionally lift up the church around the world through prayer, song, educational events and in any way appropriate to the context of the congregation. The focus would be not only on our**

- Companion Synods in Papua New Guinea and Russia, but also the Global Ministry we share in through the Global Mission Arm of the ELCA such as Missionary Sponsorship, Young Adults in Global Mission, and our support of Projects that promote the witness of the Gospel, works of compassion and Justice ministry around the world.
- Be it also resolved that Sunday, September 18th, 2022 shall be designated as the Sunday to remember, lift up and celebrate our companion church relationship with the “Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Urals, Siberia and Far East” (ELCUSFE) with a special focus on the Far Eastern Deanery. (This date was chosen because the first Sunday in October is widely observed by the churches in Russia as a harvest Sunday when they give thanks and celebrate the completion of the fall harvest).
 - Be it also resolved that a Sunday in the Epiphany season be designated by the Synod Companion Team as the Sunday to remember, lift up and celebrate our companion church relationship with the Kote District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG). We chose this Sunday because the Gospel lesson is Luke 24:13-35 which is the account of Jesus walking with two disheartened disciples on the road to Emmaus and is a story that is a wonderful illustration of the way we are to walk with our companion Christians in Papua New Guinea and Russia that Jesus might be revealed through our interactions.
 - The Central States Synod Companion Synod Team will provide resources for mission education and worship for the Epiphany Season, and additionally, prayer requests, recent news and communications from our Companion Churches prior to the two Companion Synod Sundays to help us to “accompany one another” in our journey as followers, servants and witnesses to Jesus Christ in our respective parts of God’s world.
- SA 22.06.11.A5 Resolution SA.22.04 was adopted.

Resolution SA 22.05 Memorial Calling for the Just Transition from Greenhouse Gas Emissions

This resolution comes properly before the assembly and has already been moved and seconded. This resolution was opened for discussion.

- Rev. Kaylie Ines moved to amend bullet #5 as follows:
 - “seeking that congregations in our synod include prayers for our environment and those affected at least once a month and that congregations regularly include in worship awareness around our stewardship of creation.”
 - The amendment was seconded.
 - The amendment was passed.
- Bob Anderson spoke against the resolution.
- Jolana Pinon spoke to the resolution.
- Rev. Melissa Woepfel spoke in favor of the resolution.
- Tom Mertz spoke in favor of the resolution.
- Vicar Sue from Atonement Lutheran in Overland Park, KS moved to amend bullet #6:
 - “Continue to encourage congregations & households to audit and decrease fossil fuel consumption in an ongoing basis.”
 - The amendment was seconded.

- Rev. Adam Wutka spoke against the amendment.
- Michael DeRoot spoke against the amendment.
- Rev. Amy Ohlschlaeger called the question and the assembly approved.
- The amendment was defeated.
- Rev. Noni Strand spoke in favor of the resolution.
- Corlene Lange spoke against the resolution.
- Rev. Christyn Koschman spoke in favor of the resolution.
- Rev. Ed Merckel spoke against the resolution.

The final form of the resolution before the assembly reads:

- **Be it resolved that the Central States Synod to take the following actions:**
 - **Memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA that they call upon the leadership of the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.**
 - **Encourage our Synod and congregations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in line with the above timetable**
 - **Support investment and education of our Synod and congregations about the urgency of the climate crisis both locally and globally and equip our leaders to accomplish our goals to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.**
 - **Develop partnerships and projects in our Synods and congregations that work with communities of color that are disproportionately impacted by the cost of pollution and climate change and advocate that churchwide, in consultation with the ELCA Advocacy Office, designate up to 40% of their mission funds designated for environmental concerns for this purpose.**
 - **Seeking that congregations in our synod include prayers for our environment and those affected at least once a month and that congregations regularly include in worship awareness around our stewardship of creation.**
 - **Encourage Congregations and households to decrease their fossil fuel consumption by 10% per year for each of the next three years.**
- **SA 22.06.11.A6 Resolution SA.22.05 as amended was adopted.**

Greetings from the Companion Synod Team

Rev. Gary Teske, chair of the Companion Synod Team, gave some information and updates about our companion synods: the Kote District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Urals, Siberia and Far East (ELCUSFE). He shared that the war in Ukraine is really affecting the churches in Russia and they are asking for prayers.

Resolutions

Resolution SA 22.06 Developing LGBTQIA+ Education and Cultural Competency as a Synod

This resolution comes properly before the assembly and has already been moved and seconded. This resolution was opened for discussion.

- Rev. Andrew Patty spoke in favor of the resolution.

- Rev. Dean Apel offered the following amendment, to add an additional bullet after bullet #3:
 - “Direct Hearts Across the Heartland to do their work while being committed “to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), love the neighbor (Mark 12:31), and respect the bound consciences of all (1 Corinthians 8:12 & cf Resolution 3 of the ELCA CWA 2009).”
 - The amendment was seconded.
 - Rev. Melissa Woeppel spoke against the amendment.
 - Rev. Alfie Wyatt spoke against the amendment.
 - Rev. Jennifer Thomas spoke against the amendment.
 - Rev. Dean Apel spoke in favor of the amendment.
 - Rev. Alfie Wyatt spoke against the amendment.
 - Rev. Rick Raymer spoke in favor of the amendment.
 - The amendment was defeated.
- Rev. John Brundvig spoke in favor of the resolution.
- Tom Mertz spoke to the resolution.
- Rev. Peter Rehwaldt spoke in favor of the resolution.
- Ben Bennight spoke in favor of the resolution.
- Rev. Andrew Patty spoke in favor of the resolution.
- Rev. Alfie Wyatt spoke in favor of the resolution.

The final form of the resolution before the assembly reads:

- **Be it resolved that the Central States Synod to take the following actions:**
 - **Designate Hearts Across the Heartland (a grassroots organization of LGBTQIA+ affirming members, pastors, and congregations of the synod) as a ministry partner and LGBTQIA+ social justice team for the CSS. This group was formed in 2019 by Kansas City ELCA members and congregations organizing around having a presence at KC Pride and has become a bi-monthly zoom fellowship of those interested in creating a more inclusive church. We are currently co-led by Rev. Meagan McLaughlin (St. Louis and Central Missouri) and Rev. Andrew C. Patty (Kansas City and Kansas) assisting congregations in their areas.**
 - **Direct Hearts Across the Heartland to develop educational materials on LGBTQIA+ issues and concerns that are being faced in our society for congregations and rostered leaders.**
 - **Direct Hearts Across the Heartland to create resources and practices to make our synod meetings and spaces more welcoming for LGBTQIA+ persons**
 - **Add sexual identity and gender expression to our current diversity training of rostered leaders.**
 - **Partner with Kansas Interfaith Action, Missouri Faith Voices, and other community groups to raise awareness and advocate for the rights of LGBTQIA+ persons.**
- **SA 22.06.11.A7 Resolution SA.22.06 was adopted.**

Resolution SA 22.07 Discerning a Path Toward Becoming a Reconciling in Christ Synod

This resolution was withdrawn by all of its authors before the synod assembly so it was not brought to the floor. Rev. Sarah Pierce, as one of the authors, spoke to why they withdrew this resolution.

Resolution SA 22.08 Thanksgiving for Ministry

This resolution comes properly before the assembly and has already been moved and seconded. This resolution was opened for discussion.

- Deaths
 - We remember with thanksgiving and reverence, those pastors who have died since our last assembly: Rev. Franklyn Pekarek, Rev. Bruce W. Keck, Rev. Elwin Bergstraesser, Rev. J. Rolland Christenson, Rev. Bill Pape, Rev. Donald Love, Rev. Keith Klockau.
- Retirements
 - Rev. John Kotosky, Rev. William Yancey, Rev. Roger Dennis, Rev. Kendra Nolde, Deacon Rachel Wolf, Rev. Lorna Paulus, Deacon Suzie Everingham, Rev. John Reigstad, and Deacon Mary Arie.
- Congregations disaffiliated
 - Trinity Lutheran Church, Great Bend, KS (5/1/22)
- Congregations closed
 - Resurrection Lutheran, St. Louis, MO (1/31/22)
- **SA 22.06.11.A8 Resolution SA.22.08 was adopted and the chaplain of the assembly, Rev. Jim Peters, offered a prayer of thanksgiving.**

The assembly took a break from 11:35 – 11:45 to prepare for closing worship.

CLOSING

We closed in worship, led by Bishop Candea & Rev. Austin English. Rev. Noni Strand preached.

Bishop Susan Candea declared the 2022 Central States Synod Assembly closed at 12:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Rev. Chad Langdon

Central States Synod Secretary